

HAG'S VETERANS HOLDING TEUTONS

Divisions Worn by March
21 Battle Bear Brunt
of Attack

YIELD GROUND SLOWLY

By PHILIP GIBBS
Special Cable to Evening Public Ledger
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War Correspondents' Headquarters on the Western Front, May 23.

When the German army attacked in Flanders between the neighborhood of the Loeze Hopsles and Kruisstra, a front of about five miles, they were able after violent gunfire to take a few of the French outposts, like Pompiere and Estaminet and the farm near it, which the French themselves had gained by their successful effort on May 20, and here and there they penetrated the French forward line as in coppees east of Dikchabush Lake. Tuesday morning the French troops counter-attacked and restored the situation almost exactly as it was, with the exception that a small party of Germans remained this morning in one of these coppees, covered by the machine-gun fire of the French. They suffered a number of casualties, and lost sixteen men as prisoners and six machine guns.

At the moment of the German attack yesterday, it was doubtful whether it was intended as a serious effort to gain ground in depth, and whether the first assault would be followed by succeeding waves to carry it through against the main French defenses. It is now fairly clear that this was not intended, but it was a minor action to grab back just the stretch of territory which had been lost on the 20th and also, no doubt, as a demonstration timed to coincide with the great battle down south along the line of the Aisne.

German prisoners are of this opinion, and, anyhow, it does not matter very much one way or another, now that the operations are held in check by the French, who have re-established their positions.

Interest Shifts to Aisne

For the time being the interest of the war is shifted to the position on the Aisne where the enemy has struck heavily in great force, while still threatening our northern front with huge numbers of men and artillery concentration. With that battle, I have nothing to do as a war correspondent, as it is outside my boundary, but up here in the north our thoughts are with those divisions of ours, the Eight, the Twenty-first, the Fifth and the Fifth, which have been heavily engaged in this new battle along the Aisne in the midst of French troops.

It is hard luck on them, but they have fought with the courage that made their divisions glorious in many battles. It is hard luck on them, for they helped to bear the brunt of the German onslaught of March 21 and the following weeks, and their battalions fought day after day and night after night against overwhelming odds, falling back only when the force of the enemy's great weight, but always keeping their face to the foe and fighting rearguard actions which made the German pay a frightful price and at last brought him to a dead halt.

These Are Brave Men

The Northernmost fusiliers and other battalions of the Fifth Division were men who had made a forced march to the battlefields of the Lys when the Portuguese were broken, and by the sheer valor of the young officers, sergeants, corporals and private soldiers fighting in small bodies, holding isolated positions, holding on to the death when surrounded by hordes of Germans, counter-attacking with weak numbers, and at times or five times their own, staggering up to new attacks when at last they were so tired that they could hardly stand or work or keep awake, and at last brought him to a dead halt.

So was it with the other British divisions. The Eighth and the Ninth and my's wild rush across the old Somme battlefield and helped stem that tide by their bodies, hating the way to Amiens, their spirit never failing, though their losses were many, and obeying the commander-in-chief's watchword of fighting to the last with their backs to the wall.

The Twenty-first division are veterans of this war. Their first baptism of fire was in the battle of Loos ages ago, as time counts now. They too were in the retreat that followed March 21 of this spring, and their rearguard actions were fought by small bodies of men tried to the last point of human fatigue, but never giving up ground without taking toll of the enemy.

Tried Veterans Face Attack

The Twenty-first division fought all through from Wytschaete Ridge to the end of the Flanders battles last year, and the end of the offensive began at the end of March this year fought again, as then, with dogged devotion and pride beyond the fear of death. They had long hard fighting, too long except for long great need, too hard except that they never lost their fighting spirit, and in separate bodies between Stenwerk and Mesen they stuck it out not only with amazing endurance, but with quality of courage which enabled them to attack and counter-attack, so that the enemy had to give ground before them.

Those English county troops are the men against whom the enemy has hurled new masses of fresh troops, and the heart of their old comrades up here in the north goes out to them.

U. S. Encourages Slavic Independence

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Slav nation is a vital interest of Italy, just as the completion of Italian nationality is a vital interest of the Yugoslav nation. And, therefore, the representatives of the two peoples pledge themselves to use their utmost effort to the end that during the war and at the moment of peace these aims of the two peoples may be fully attained in their entirety.

Second. They affirm that the liberation of the Adriatic and the securing of peace against every actual and eventual enemy is a vital interest of the two peoples.

Third. They pledge themselves to resolve amicably in the interest of future good and sincere relations between the two peoples, the various territorial controversies on the basis of nationality and the rights of peoples to decide their own fate, and in such a manner as not to injure the vital interests of the two nations as defined at the moment of peace.

Fourth. The nuclei of one people, which may have to be included within the frontiers of others, shall be guaranteed the right to have their language and culture preserved and their rights secured.

FRENCH HURL RESERVES INTO BATTLE OF AISNE

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"An attempted enemy raid between Givenchy and La Bassee was repulsed."

"A hostile attack south of the Ypres-Comines Canal against one of our posts was repulsed after sharp fighting."

"North of Albert, in the neighborhood of Alette, east of Robecq and northwest of Merville, hostile artillery was active."

"East of Arras and south of Lens there was increased artillery activity."

Reserves in Action

French reserves have been hurled into the battle of the Aisne, along the Vesle River, putting the breaks on the German offensive on the Allied center.

The Allies still hold the plateau to the northeast of Soissons, commanding the confluence of the Vesle and the Aisne and the heights south of Bordon.

On the right flank the British are astride the Aisne-Marne Canal, holding the heights flanking it on the southwest.

Allied reserves were brought up in perfect order. The enemy has already hurled thirty-five divisions into the battle. General Foch's problem now is to re-establish the equilibrium of the center, in the region of Fismes.

The Kaiser's soldiers crossed the Vesle River on a bridge of corpses, after a most furious struggle around Fismes, says a dispatch from the Aisne front. The Germans are now standing face to face with the Allied reserve armies in that zone.

Americans in Fighting

American troops have taken part in the great battle raging between Rheims and Soissons. Correspondents with the French troops described the gallant part that American regiments are playing. They were brought into action with the reserve force called upon to help stem the German advance.

The Americans took part in counter-attacks that were launched in the face of great clouds of dense poison gas sent over by the Germans.

Premier Clemenceau, of France, has gone to the battle front, said a dispatch from Paris today. (It is assumed that the French Premier has gone to the Aisne battle front, now the critical field of the struggle.)

Berlin's Claims

The Germans have penetrated a maximum depth of about eleven miles into the Allied positions on the Aisne front, according to the claims of the Berlin War Office in its yesterday's and last night's reports. The capture of 15,000 prisoners also was claimed. The maximum penetration was attained at only two points in the center of the new drive.

A Wolff Bureau telegram filed in Berlin on Tuesday, in giving an account of the fighting along the Chemin des Dames (Aisne front), briefly mentions that among the prisoners taken from the British are a number of American doctors.

The enemy advance is in the shape of a double triangle.

The larger one's base extends from Berry-au-Bac, a distance of about twenty-one miles in an air line. Its apex is on the southern bank of the Vesle, where the Germans have crossed the Chemin-des-Dames and the Ailette, Aisne and Vesle Rivers.

The other triangle has for its base the nine-mile front from Berry-au-Bac to Brimont.

Official Reports

The text of last night's statement from the French War Office follows:

Last night and today the enemy, taking advantage of his numerical superiority, renewed his thrust more strongly toward the southwest of Soissons. On our left we counter-attacked vigorously, stopped the German advance and broke up attacks on the heights of Neuville-sur-Margival and Vregny, northeast of Soissons, and on the heights in the region of Ciry, Salsogne and Vasseny, dominating the Vesle Valley.

The principal effort was directed toward rolling back the center on the line of the Vesle, which the Germans succeeded in crossing at several points, notably in the region of Bazoches and Fismes.

On our right the British withstood the assaults against the Massif of St. Thierry, inflicting particularly heavy losses.

(A "massif" is a principal mountain mass, more or less distinctly defined by valleys and culminating in one or more eminences.)

The text of the official report from Field Marshal Haig last night reads: Counter-attacks carried out early this morning by French and British troops successfully re-established our line east of Dikchabush Lake. Several prisoners were captured. In the enemy's attacks yesterday morning in this sector and to the south as far as

Loire, four German divisions are known to have been engaged. In the course of the fighting heavy losses were inflicted on these divisions. The Allied line has been maintained at all points.

Notwithstanding the smaller strength of the Entente forces, they did their utmost to stay the immense pressure of the enemy troops, ten times their number. The German rush, which was one of the most rapid since the beginning of the war, could not be held, however, as the wave after wave in dense lines came forward.

The situation is considered more reassuring here and in Paris. Most recent advice from the front shows that while the violence of the enemy's effort has not slackened, he is making headway only on the center, and that even there the momentum is giving signs of lessening. The Allies are beginning to react with effect on the wings.

The retirement of the French and British was made in progressive, organized fashion, the troops destroying their material as they left or taking it along with them. The army staff still retains the fullest confidence in the outcome of the battle.

The attack on the Aisne front cannot be considered a "side-show," being the second most extensive offensive of the war on the western front.

The Times says it implies an intention to menace Paris more directly, but does not imply an abandonment of the thrust on Amiens and the Somme estuary or the threat against the Channel ports.

AMERICAN ARTILLERY BREAKS GAS ATTACK

Continued from Page One

With the American Army in Lorraine, May 23.—The terrific gas attack was broken up by American artillery fire. The gas was blown back into the German positions by the American guns.

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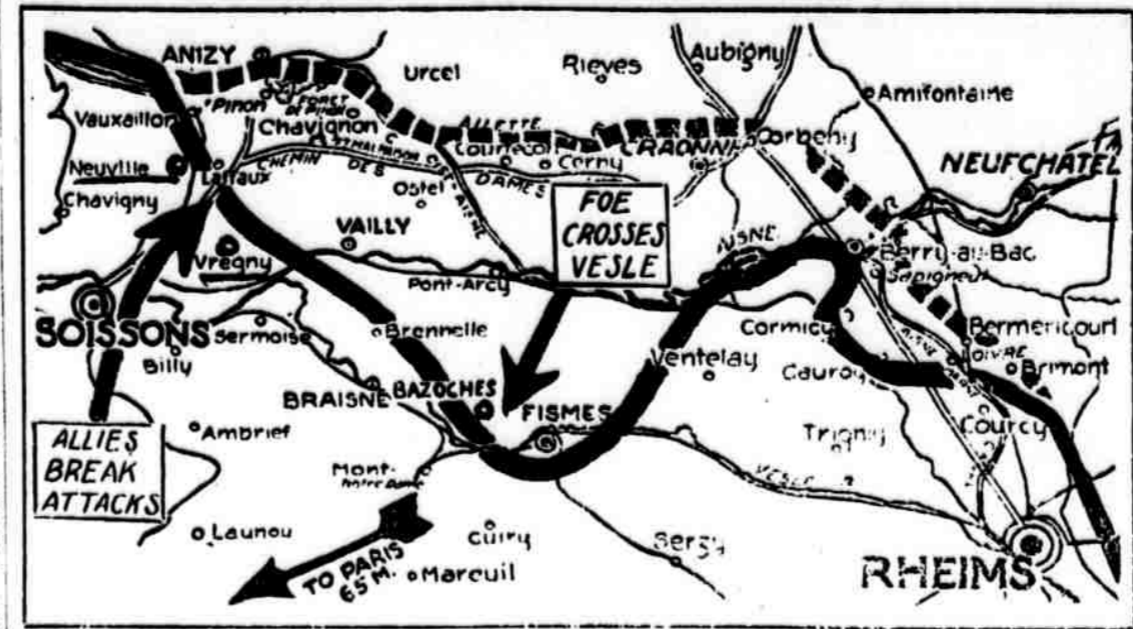
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GERMAN OFFENSIVE ON THE AISNE



The black line shows the present German line. The broken line shows the German line at the opening of the offensive. The enemy has crossed the Vesle, paralleling the Aisne at an average distance of 3 to 10 miles in the regions of Bazoches and Fismes. The Allied left has broken up heavy attacks on the Neuville-Vregny line.

Yankees Break Two Attacks on Cantigny

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until his wounds forced him to lay it down.

Enemy Gets Under Cover

The bodies hid in the grass, in rye fields, in dugouts—anywhere there was the slightest cover.

Then came the work with bayonets, grenades and flame throwers. Thirty Germans were incinerated in one dugout when they fired on the Americans after crying "Kamerad!"

Big columns in Cantigny, where it was possible to conceal a hundred troops, were completely smashed by American artillery. Enemy losses were probably the heaviest in these pits of death.

The Germans ran toward the Americans "Kamerad!" in groups of ten and twenty from dugouts or when they were cornered.

In hand-to-hand fighting the Americans used the weapon they have learned to love—the bayonet—and the bodies squealed like pigs when they faced the cold steel.

Prisoners were a polyglot mess, ranging from boys of eighteen or nineteen to men of forty-five. All were suffering from shell shock, a result of the tremendous bombardment which preceded the assault.

French officers gave the highest praise to the offensive spirit of the Americans. "Only did they show no hesitation in the assault, but their officers experienced considerable difficulty in holding them back."

Wounded Americans Cheerful

The first question asked by wounded soldiers arriving at the hospital was always as to when they would be able to return to the line.

"If anything more like this is coming off I don't want to miss it," explained Albert F. Billings, of Brooklyn, was brought in with a slight scalp wound.

At the same time Lieutenant Butler, another American soldier, was brought in wounded.

"Hello, Butler," shouted Billings, "where did they get you?"

"In the leg," Butler laughed ironically. "They tried to give you a hair cut."

"Yes, they nearly finished me," replied Billings. "A machine-gun bullet passed through the front of my tunic and out the other side. If it had been half an inch on the other side my birds would have been sending me daisies. How is Lieutenant Churchill?"

"Well, he was spun around by a shell, but he is all right, I reckon," was the answer.

"We gave them hell, anyway," declared Billings. "Me for a snore. My bed sheets now look mighty good to me."

Lieutenant Irvin Wood, of Oakland, Cal., a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, who was wounded, was a cheerful patient.

"It was just a little clip in the leg," said he. "Tell the folks in the States that the gaiters of the men in the ranks was better than any football game ever attended. It was a regular party walkaway."

After the first arrivals the doctors were extremely busy in handling the patients until they had examined their pockets. They found the majority of them had hand grenades tucked all over them. When four grenades were pulled from the hip pockets of one of the boys he drawled:

"Great ball game this morning, doc." All the Americans rehearsed the attack in the spot of the line, but many of them said that when they saw the foolish looking tanks actually waddling across the shell holes they had to laugh. Some times they thought the tanks weren't going fast enough so they ran ahead of them.

Lieutenant Wood, of Oakland, Cal., said he had the greatest difficulty in holding his men back. Wood was

Two Lone Americans Cause Berlin Boast

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With the American Army in France, May 23.—An opportunity to mention the capture of "prisoners from American regiments" in the latest German official communication was afforded by the capture of two lone Americans.

One of the Americans is missing in Pleadry and one in the Luneville sector. These are the only men reported missing.

slightly wounded, but is one of the most enthusiastic men in France.

Washington, May 23. General Pershing's official communique relative to the capture of Cantigny by American troops and made public by the War Department, follows:

In Pleadry our troops, attacking on a front of one and one-fourth miles, advanced our lines and captured the village of Cantigny. We took 200 prisoners and inflicted on the enemy severe losses in killed and wounded. Our casualties were relatively small. Hostile counter-attacks broke down under our fire.

In Lorraine and in the Woivre artillery on both sides continued active. Early in the day our aviators shot down a hostile machine.

Complete details of the first sizeable American attack in France against Cantigny will be given out by the War Department, Secretary Baker declared today.

Voicing great enthusiasm, officials of the War Department, including the Secretary, expressed themselves as very proud of the spirit and fighting abilities of the Yankees.

"We are constantly receiving reports of the splendid valor and successful operations of the American soldiers," Secretary Baker said. "And I am very proud of the part they are playing. The details of these actions will be told more fully in the future."

Dickinson Seminary Drops German

Williamsport, Pa., May 23.—The board of directors of Dickinson Seminary has voted unanimously to discontinue the study of German and to substitute Spanish. The commencement exercises were held yesterday.

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numbered nine divisions. In the sector of General Fritz von Below, extending across the Rheims front to Suippe, near Auberville, there were eight divisions. The whole twenty-five miles attacked yesterday had therefore been held till the eve of battle by only seven or eight divisions. The exact number of divisions engaged yesterday is not yet known, but it seems to have been about twenty-five, or more than a quarter of a million combatants.

There is here a curious difference and likeness as compared with the first phase of the offensive on March 21. To the seventeen divisions already holding the sector of the Aisne there were added another seventeen. This time the same number has been added where there were only eight. Two months ago the front of attack was about forty miles long. This time a rather dense force was employed, perhaps because the Aisne height constituted a formidable position and it was intended to carry it at a single rush.

While the front keeps its present shape the German staff has necessarily a great advantage over that of the Allies, in that it is acting from the center of a crescent, and they are around and outside of it. I have described the elaborate scheme, supported by the utmost speed in bringing up the army of shock to its starting point.

If enough time can be given to preparations—and, as my last message showed, the pause had been abnormal—they must gain a certain benefit of surprise, and with this benefit a mass of shock must win a certain depth of ground. It is out of the question at the present for the Allies to hold all possible sectors of attack strongly enough to make them perfectly secure, and indeed if they had men enough this is not the way in which they would be used.

Nothing is more difficult for laymen to see, and yet nothing is more certain, than the change of values the war evolves. Our only notions of the Chemin-des-Dames were obtained in a time very different from the present emergency, the time of fixed fronts and of methods defensive and offensive that are already old-fashioned to those of us who have watched these blood-soaked hills and gullies for nearly four years through heartrending vicissitudes, who remember Haig's and Smith-Dorrien's first attempts to scale what seemed an impenetrable fortress, who saw the French bluecoats rush forward last summer till at length they stood firm on the cliffs of Craonne and Heurteville, who explored the dragon's cave at Malmont fort and the vast Mont Parnasse quarry when they still stood firm on the cliffs of Craonne and Heurteville.

It is no light thing that ground so full of tragic memories should be lost. I have seen the ruins of the village of Le Chateau, sleeping in a dugout in Pinon forest, and examining the outposts then held the northern edge of the hills.

War pays little regard to sentiment, and it is not a speculative stroke or sentimental score that will restore the falling fortunes of the Hohenzollerns. No doubt the French command found it grievous yesterday to order a retreat to the Aisne. Fewer men might have been lost and lost in doing so many good lives which are after all more sacred than the most sacred earth.

The attack could not be anticipated. It was far beyond the powers of the defensive force to ward it off. With sound tactics sense the heaviest assault was directed toward the eastern end of the Aisne hills as soon as it became evident that this corner could not be held, and that from here the whole line was in danger.

The German forces include some of the specially trained units that fought in Von Hutier's army in the March attack.

completely in the communications from General Pershing.

With the British Army in France, May 23.—Two officers were among the prisoners taken by the Americans in their attack on the village of Cantigny. The Americans attained all their objectives.

The American attack was along a two-kilometer front, and it seems to have taken the hard-hitting Americans, supported by French troops, just about three-quarters of an hour to complete their conquest, which included that amount of territory as well as the village of Cantigny.

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